

Message Text

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FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6262
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1136

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, XF, IZ, UR
SUBJECT: IRAQI-SOVIET RELATIONS

REF: BAGHDAD 993, 1095, 1113, 1122, 1125, 1131 (ALL NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: IRAQI REGIME IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE EXECUTED SOME LOCAL COMMUNISTS ACCUSED OF INFILTRATING ARMY AND OTHER SENSITIVE STATE INSTITUTIONS. LARGE NUMBERS OF COMMUNISTS PROBABLY STILL UNDER ARREST. AUTHORITATIVE BAATH PARTY EDITORIALS HINT AT POSSIBLE COUP AND AFFIRM REGIME'S DETERMINATION TO PROTECT INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY. MEDIA NOW PROJECTING IMAGE OF NORMALCY. IMPLICATIONS FOR IRAQI-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE UNCLEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. LOCAL DIPLOMATS AND IRAQI SOURCES CONTINUE TO PROVIDE CONFLICTING ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF IRAQI COMMUNISTS WHO HAVE BEEN EXECUTED FOR INFILTRATION INTO ARMED FORCES AND
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SENSITIVE CIVILIAN MINISTRIES. LOWER RANGE OF FIGURES SEEMINGLY BASED UPON FAIRLY SOLID AUTHORITY, SUCH AS FOREIGN MINISTRY OR INFORMATION MINISTRY OFFICIALS, IS 14 TO 17. LOCAL SOURCE WITH MILITARY PROCUREMENT CONTACTS HAS HEARD THAT FIVE ARMY OFFICERS, RANKING FROM CAPTAIN TO COLONEL, WERE AMONG THOSE EXECUTED. ANOTHER SOURCE CLAIMS HE SPOKE WITH IRAQI COMMUNIST WHO

REPORTED THAT 21 PARTY MEMBERS WERE EXECUTED IN MID-MAY. COMMUNIST NAMED NAMES BUT COULD NOT STATE DEFINITELY THAT BODIES HAD BEEN TURNED OVER TO RELATIVES, SO POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT SENTENCES HAVE BEEN HANDED DOWN FOR EXECUTIONS WHICH ARE YET TO TAKE PLACE. IT IS ALSO THOUGHT THAT ADDITIONAL LARGE NUMBERS OF IRAQI COMMUNISTS ARE UNDER DETENTION FOR INTERROGATION, INCLUDING OFFICERS OF BOTH ARMY AND AIR FORCE.

3. SO FAR AS IS KNOWN, NO SENIOR MEMBERS OF COMMUNIST PARTY HAVE BEEN ARRESTED OR EXECUTED. REPORTS WE HAVE HEARD SEEM TO DEAL INSTEAD WITH RELATIVELY JUNIOR PARTY MEMBERS WHOSE AFFILIATION WAS CLANDESTINE AND WHO WERE EITHER SERVING AS ARMY OFFICERS OR WORKING IN SENSITIVE GOVERNMENT OFFICES WITH A BAATH PARTY COVER.

4. SECOND AND CONCLUDING INSTALLMENT OF EDITORIAL SERIES IN BAATH PARTY DAILY AL-THAWRA ENTITLED "POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE ARMED FORCES" (BAGHDAD 1122) TAKES LINE THAT PROHIBITION OF SUCH ACTIVITY BY NON-BAATHIS IS PERFECTLY NORMAL AND ALONG SAME LINES AS PROHIBITION OF ACTIVITY BY NON-COMMUNISTS IN THE ARMED FORCES OF WARSAW PACT STATES. EDITORIAL STATES THE NECESSITY FOR ADOPTING A STRICT ATTITUDE IN RESPECT TO SUCH ACTIVITY AND THE "EXECUTION OF ANYBODY GUILTY OF FOLLY IN THIS RESPECT."

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5. EDITORIAL CHARGES THAT THE ATTITUDE OF SOME PARTIES WITHIN THE POPULAR AND PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL FRONT (PPNF) IS BASED UPON "SHORT TERM AND UNSOUND CALCULATIONS ENVISAGING A LEAP INTO POWER BY MEANS OF A MILITARY COUP." EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT IRAQ HAS FOUND IT NECESSARY TO TAKE A FIRM STAND IN PROTECTION OF ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM BOTH "THE ENEMY AND THE FRIEND." SINCE THE TERM FRIENDLY STATES IS INVARIABLY USED HERE IN REFERENCE TO THE SOCIALIST BLOC, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT EDITORIAL IS WARNING AGAINST UNDUE DEPENDENCE UPON SOVIET UNION. EDITORIALIST CONCLUDES THAT TO MAINTAIN SILENCE OR TO ACCEPT NON-BAATHI POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE ARMED FORCES IS "TO LOSE THE REVOLUTION AND FORFEIT SOVEREIGNTY."

6. IT IS STILL UNCLEAR WHETHER IRAQI REGIME HAS EVIDENCE OR ONLY SUSPECTS THAT EITHER LOCAL COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERSHIP OR SOVIET UNION WAS INVOLVED IN INFILTRATION OF COMMUNISTS INTO SENSITIVE POSITIONS. AL-THAWRA EDITORIALS STATE THAT REGIME INTENDS TO CONTINUE WITH THE PPNF, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO DIRECT CRITICAL REFERENCE TO THE SOVIET UNION.

IRAQI COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF AZIZ MOHAMMED HAS REPORTEDLY TRIED TO SEE TOP IRAQI LEADERSHIP BUT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO MEET ABOVE THE LEVEL OF NAIM HADDAD, RCC MEMBER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PPNF. IT IS ALSO RUMORED THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR BARKOVSKY DISCUSSED WITH SOME LOCAL COMMUNISTS THE DESIRABILITY OF BREZHNEV RAISING THE ISSUE OF MISTREATMENT OF IRAQI COMMUNISTS WITH IRAQI LEADERS. REPORTEDLY, LOCAL COMMUNISTS ADVISED AGAINST BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION, FEARING IT WOULD TEND TO SUPPORT CHARGE WHICH BAATH PARTY WEEKLY AL-RAASID VOICED THREE WEEKS AGO THAT IRAQI COMMUNISTS WERE SUBSERVIENT TO MOSCOW (BAGHDAD 992).

7. AN EXPLANATION COMPLEMENTARY TO THEORY THAT LOCAL
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COMMUNISTS WERE INVOLVED IN INFILTRATION, AND POSSIBLY IN PLOTTING A COUP, IS POSSIBILITY THAT BAATH PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS DETECTED AN ANTI-COMMUNIST AND ANTI-SOVIET MOOD AT PARTY GRASS ROOTS. IT IS THOUGHT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1136

THAT LONG-AWAITED BAATH PARTY ELECTIONS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS MAY SHOW A DISENCHANTMENT WITH PARTY OFFICIALS WHO HAD LEFTIST LEANINGS. A LITTLE RED-BAITING MAY BE GOOD POLITICS RIGHT NOW FOR LEADERSHIP OF IRAQI BAATH. NONETHELESS, THERE REMAIN MANY PARTY MEMBERS WHO ARE ATTACHED TO PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALIST SOLIDARITY, AND AL-THAWRA EDITORIALS COULD WELL BE SERVING TO EDUCATE BOTH MODERATE AND LEFTIST FACTIONS WITHIN THE PARTY TO WHAT LEADERSHIP VIEWS AS THE CORRECT BALANCE BETWEEN COOPERATION WITH PROGRESSIVE FORCES AND LIMITATION ON NON-BAATHI POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

8. SOVIET EMBASSY, FOR ITS PART, IS KEEPING A VERY STIFF UPPER LIP AND IS OFFERING NO COMMENT DESPITE POINTED QUERIES FROM DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES. IN INTERESTING COMMENTARY ON LOCAL ATMOSPHERE, A HEADY MIXTURE OF PARANOIA AND MISINFORMATION, ONE SOVIET EMBOFF SUGGESTED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO PRINCIPAL OFFICER THAT PARTIAL EXPLANATION FOR CURRENT DIFFICULTIES OF LOCAL COMMUNISTS MIGHT LIE IN RECENT VISIT OF CHICAGO TRIBUNE GROUP (BAGHDAD 1131). HE STRESSED FACT THAT THE VISIT HAD RECEIVED NO PRESS MENTION WHATEVER, WAS FIRST SUCH VISIT IN A LONG TIME, AND CAME AT A VERY INTERESTING MOMENT IN SOVIET-IRAQI RELATIONS. AS WE REPORTED, TRIB STAFFERS WERE QUITE DISAPPOINTED IN THE RESULTS OF THEIR STOP, BUT THEY AT LEAST STARTED SOME NEW RUMORS.

9. FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF AL-THAWRA ARTICLES, REPEATED THROUGHOUT THE DAY BY RADIO AND TV BUT OTHERWISE UNACCOMPANIED BY ANY OTHER MEDIA CRITICISM OF COMMUNISTS, BAGHDAD PRESS RETURNED TO ITS USUAL NEWS TREATMENT. SINCE THIS MEANS WELL LEFT-OF-CENTER WITH SUPPORT FOR ANTI-IMPERIALIST AND REJECTIONIST VIEW POINTS, THERE IS NO SIGN OF ANY WEAKENING OF IRAQI-SOVIET RELATIONS. REGIME IS CONVEYING THROUGH MEDIA AN IMAGE OF NORMALCY, AS SYMBOLIZED BY LAST NIGHT'S MEETING OF SUPREME PLANNING COUNCIL, OVER WHICH SADDAM HUSSEIN PRESIDED.

10. COMMENT: WE MAY NEVER KNOW FULL FACTS ABOUT EXECUTIONS, ALTHOUGH THERE SEEMS TO BE FAIR EVIDENCE THAT AT LEAST SOME HAVE TAKEN PLACE AND THAT INFILTRATION OF ARMED FORCES BY COMMUNISTS MAY HAVE BEEN THE PROXIMATE CAUSE. IT IS FAR TOO EARLY TO JUDGE WHAT EFFECT THESE EVENTS MAY HAVE ON LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BAATH AND LOCAL COMMUNISTS OR BETWEEN IRAQ AND THE SOVIET UNION. WE EXPECT THAT BAATH

PARTY WILL PROBABLY ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST A
NOMINAL ALLIANCE WITH COMMUNISTS IN THE PPNF. WHETHER
LOCAL COMMUNISTS, WHO HAVE BEEN DIVIDED ON THIS SUBJECT
IN THE PAST, WILL AGREE TO CONTINUE RELATIONSHIP WHICH
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SEEMS TO OFFER THEM VERY LITTLE IS MORE PROBLEMATICAL.
THE CHOICE, HOWEVER, MAY BE TOTAL SUPPRESSION. WITH
RESPECT TO IRAQ'S OVERALL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET
UNION, WE BELIEVE THAT REGIME MAY LOOK FOR WAYS TO
REASSURE SOVIET UNION THAT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS AND EVEN PARTY-TO-PARTY RELATIONS BETWEEN
BAATH AND SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY ARE NOT AFFECTED
BY INTERNAL PROBLEMS REPORTED ABOVE. ARTICLES IN AL-THAWRA
COULD EVEN BE VIEWED IN THAT LIGHT. POSSIBLE STRAINS
AS THE RESULT OF ERITREAN INVOLVEMENT ARE A SEPARATE
MATTER.

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